

SB Interview

Interviewer: Good morning, thank you for participating in this research interview. Today we will be discussing the role of digital skills in refugee integration. Can you start by introducing yourself?

SB: Good morning. I'm SB and I am 35 years old.

Interviewer: Can you also tell me which part of Eritrea you came from and your level of education?

SB: Yes, I am from rural Seniafe and I attended few years of school.

Interviewer: Now, let's start with the types of digital devices you are familiar with and how often you use them. Could you tell me about the digital devices you are familiar with and how frequently you use them?

SB: What do you mean by digital devices?

Interviewer: I mean if you use digital devices like phone, computer, or tablet?

SB: I have this phone and I use it always all the time.

Interviewer: Now let's move on to the features, software, or applications you use on your mobile phone. Could you provide some examples of what you use them for?

SB: The phone? I use it for making calls of course.

Interviewer: What else do you use it for? Do you use social media apps like Facebook and WhatsApp?

SB: Yes, I use WhatsApp and IMO.

Interviewer: Do you also use DigID or Internet banking and email?

SB: I can't use them myself on my phone but I have digid and a bank account.

Interviewer: Now, moving on to the integration process. How has the integration process been for you so far?

SB: As a refugee, adapting to a new country has been difficult. But I thank God that I am here.

Interviewer: Could you explain what integration means to you?

SB: Integration, for me, means becoming one with the natives here and living happily. That is an answer, right?

Interviewer: Of course. Now, let's talk about how you use digital technologies in your everyday life. Could you elaborate on that?

SB: I use my smartphone for making calls here and also I talk with my relatives in Addis Ababa and Kampala using WhatsApp and IMO. As you know WhatsApp and IMO do not work in Eritrea so I call my relatives in Eritrea directly every two or three weeks..

Now, do you feel that digital technologies have helped or hindered your integration into Dutch society? Could you provide specific examples?

SB: I don't have experience using technological tools. Because of that I can't do many things by myself, people with the know how can help you do things or solve your issues. But I can't do things that I have to do. Does that answer the question?

IR: Yes, do you think the fact that everything is digitalized here hinders you from doing things that you would like to do?

SB: Of course it does, every two weeks I go to my case worker carrying the letters and my phone. It is the language and the digital that is very difficult to navigate. So, it makes it difficult for me to do many things.

IR: Can you give me examples of these things?

SB: Yes, making appointment with a doctor. For that you need to do it on the internet, they gave me a piece of paper and told me to login and make, change or cancel appointments. But I can't do it myself. The other option is making appointment by calling them. That is also not easy because of the language. But there are interpreters who speak Tigrinya during actual medical examinations. Another issue is when you have something to do with the municipality or IND. They would ask you to do something online most of the time.

Interviewer: Thank you for sharing your experiences. Now, let's focus on digital skills for learning about rights and responsibilities. How do you currently use digital technologies to access information about your rights and obligations as a refugee in the Netherlands?

SB: We were given an orientation about the culture, the rules and regulations in this country at the camp and afterwards during the language course.

Interviewer: Have you used any digital tools or resources to learn Dutch or other languages? How effective have these been?

SB: At the course they were showing us videos and short dramas. Later I was watching films in Dutch language.

Interviewer: Have you encountered any challenges using digital technologies in the Netherlands, such as language barriers or lack of access to technology? If so, how have you overcome these challenges, if at all?

SB: Unfortunately for me I haven't gone further with my education back home, and that's why I don't use a computer or other technologies. For me language is the biggest challenge I think. I am still struggling learning the language. But to use the technology the problem is not only language. People with education, who don't speak Dutch language can do a lot of things with their computers and internet. For me that is also a challenge. I once bought a computer but I couldn't learn it. I was very disappointed and later I sent it to my younger brother who is in Addis Ababa. He is by the way attending college in Addis Ababa. He is very brilliant kid. I didn't want him to end up uneducated, so I pay for his education and everything.

Interviewer: Now, let's move on to digital skills and social connections. Do you use any online platforms or apps to connect with other refugees or

people from your home country? How has this affected your sense of community and belonging in the Netherlands?

SB: Yes, of course. I use WhatsApp and IMO to maintain my contact with my siblings in Addis Ababa. But also here, besides to direct calls I use WhatsApp to communicate with other Eritreans here. I have a lot of friends here in Amsterdam, Rotterdam and Utrecht. I spend time with them too. Especially weekends we spend time together. If I didn't have friends from my country, I don't know how I could live here. They mean a lot to me.

Interviewer: Have you had the opportunity to interact with Dutch people or participate in Dutch social events?

SB: Yes, I have colleagues who are Dutch. I work in a hotel and there are Dutch as well as non Dutch workers.

Interviewer: Have you used any digital tools or platforms to connect with Dutch people or participate in Dutch social events?

SB: No, except WhatsApp at the work place.

Interviewer: Now, let's discuss digital skills and employment. Have you been able to find employment since arriving in the Netherlands? If not, what are the challenges you face in finding a job?

SB: Yes, I have a job at a hotel. I am a housekeeper. I do cleaning, changing and making the beds after the customers left.

Interviewer: Have you used any online platforms or resources to search for job opportunities?

SB: No, I didn't.

Interviewer: Have you received any support or training to develop digital skills related to job search or job performance?

SB: No, I didn't.

IR: Do you feel that digital skills are important in accessing basic services in the Netherlands? Have you used any digital tools or resources to help you navigate the Dutch system and access these services?

SB: Yes, everything is in the internet and those who have learned who have the skills are better situated and have a better advantage.

IR: Have you faced any challenges in accessing basic services such as healthcare, education, or housing in the Netherlands?

SB: Yes, I have faced many challenges in accessing basic services. The main challenge for me as I said before is the language and also not being able to use these technologies as I wanted.

IR: Can you give me examples of challenges you faced?

SB: Yes, I told you earlier that I go to my case worker every two or three weeks carrying all the letters and things that I wanted get done. My case workers have changed many times and not all of them were very supportive. One was actually not happy with me taking everything to her or calling multiple times seeking assistance. So, I don't feel good troubling them with everything. Also, I received a fine of 400 Euros because I failed to pay an outstanding utility payment. That was because I didn't understand the letter. Here, there are agents who book our tickets and help us get visas. I don't want to mention a name but there is this Habesha man who exploits his fellow refugees in this country. Many of us (Eritreans) go to him when we want a flight ticket. So, about two years ago I wanted to go to Addis Ababa and went to his office to buy a ticket and for him to apply a visa for me. I paid 900 Euros and he told me to come back in a week to get the ticket along with my visa. When I went back he told me that they rejected my visa application. When I asked him for my money back he said

it was non refundable. Later, I learned that he has been doing the same thing for many others as well. What he do is, he charges almost double of the actual rates and then in some cases like mine he doesn't even refund you. He has been taking advantage of poor immigrants.

IR: Have you had any opportunities to attend digital skills training programs or workshops in the Netherlands? If so, can you describe your experience and how it has benefited you?

SB: No, I haven't.

IR: Are there any specific digital skills or areas of knowledge that you feel would be particularly valuable for your integration into Dutch society? Why?

SB: If you can read and understand the language, if you can use a computer and the internet you will be happy here. So, I think it is a computer skill that can help refugees.

IR: What kind of support or resources do you think would be beneficial in helping refugees like yourself in the Netherlands improve their digital skills and enhance their integration?

SB: I think training is very important. As refugees, we have a lot of time staying in camps doing nothing. Some people are fast, they understand things quickly, some people are not. So we can make use of the time we

spend in camps to learn and develop some skills that we can use them afterwards.

Interviewer: Thank you for sharing your experiences. Is there anything else you would like to add or share about your experience with digital skills and integration?

SB: Thank you very much.